

Mental health reports provide a template for the nation

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The report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System aligns in many ways with the recent report of the Productivity Commission, strengthening the impetus for more effective and equitable care and support Australia-wide, the Consumers Health Forum of Australia says.

"The Victorian report shares with the Productivity Commission's mental health report a blueprint for a fresh standard of support and access to care for mental health. The direction of both reports conquers the habitual barriers that have previously consigned mental health care to second class status compared to what's routinely available for people with physical illness," the CEO of CHF, Leanne Wells, said.

"The key points of alignment of the two reports include:

- Holistic/joined up services/person-centred care
- Equitable access to service.
- Access to the right services and better integration of services
- Improve care for people in crisis
- Support for families and carers

Contact: Mark Metherell, 0429 111 986

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- Better support for younger people
- Better support for people in the justice system
- Strengthening the workforce

“In its submission to the Productivity Commission last year, the Consumers Health Forum has said it supported a shift towards prevention, early intervention and coordinated community support through the primary health care setting. We support a stepped model of care, with the capability to step up into higher intensity services where required, but with a focus on providing low intensity care at an early stage to prevent deterioration where possible.

“The Victorian Commission report provides a comprehensive plan for integrated services that it says should be a community-based model of care where people receive the most appropriate treatment, care and support for their needs at any given point, close to where they live, to the extent that this is possible.

“CHF strongly welcomes the Commission’s calls for mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support to be integrated with the support that people receive for their physical health care.

“It provides for community mental health and wellbeing services to offer three core functions:

- Expansion in treatments and therapies and wellbeing supports, improved care planning and coordination, assistance and connections to other community services including housing

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- Services to help people access treatment, care and support and a new 24/7 comprehensive response to emergencies and crises.
- Supports for primary and secondary care providers (such as GPs and community health services) from mental health specialists, or shared care arrangements between specialists and GPs and community health services to better support consumers.

“We also welcome the Commission’s recommendation that the new models will be co-designed and trialled in community care and secure extended care settings.

“As both reports have made clear, many of the remedies to mental health issues can come from within the community with the support of integrated and proactive services,” Ms Wells said.

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